

# Reynolds breaks in green kid

**Breaking In**  
Cineplex Odeon Theatres

review by Paul Murphy

Accomplished filmmakers always carry the weight of their past work with them. The consequence is that when it comes to judging the worth of their latest film, comparisons

are inevitable. *Breaking In* is no exception. Despite a surprisingly good performance from its star, Burt Reynolds, it suffers in comparison to the past work of director Bill Forsyth and screenwriter John Sayles.

Forsyth is a Scottish director, best known for the comedies *Gregory's Girl* and the sublime *Local Hero*. Forsyth's films exhibit a

gentle, understated sensitivity, suffused with bittersweet irony and empathy for his characters, who are invariably ordinary and working-class. Sayles is an American filmmaker, whose two most recent films, *Matewan* and *Eight Men Out*, respectively explored the systematic exploitation of coal miners and baseball players in 1920's America.

When two intelligent filmmakers collaborate, expectations tend to be inflated. The main reason *Breaking In* fails to meet these expectations is that its premise is yawningly conventional. This is yet another 'buddy picture,' a category which is currently saturating Hollywood film. The plot, like such recent films as *The Color of Money* and *Colors*, deals with an old professional imparting his wisdom to his young protege. Ernie (Burt Reynolds), the sage-figure, meets Mike (Casey Siemaszko), the novice-figure, by coincidence, as they both happen to be breaking into the same house. Ernie takes Mike on as a partner, and he initiates him into the rituals and arts of professional safe-cracking.

This is familiar cinematic terrain, whose familiarity is somewhat mitigated by the

unconventional quirks of the filmmakers. They do their best to stamp the film with their own personalities, such that it departs from the common patterns of the genre. The young novice, counter to type, is never fully successful in his exploits. The efforts of Ernie to teach Mike the rules of the game are wasted on what is an essentially unintelligent character. And, throughout the film, the 'Forsyth touch' is present. Rarely going for a big belly laugh, Forsyth always induces a general tone of good humour.

The greatest surprise of *Breaking In* is the performance of Burt Reynolds. After coasting through countless mediocre action films and idiotic comedies, it's almost revelatory to see Reynolds really acting. With his grey hair, heavy glasses and undisguised gut, Reynolds is certainly gambling with his macho persona. He sensitively creates a character whose professionalism and perfectionism disguise a profound sense of loneliness.

By comparison with *Local Hero* and *Matewan*, *Breaking In* doesn't live up to expectations. But on its own merits, it is unassuming, unpretentious, and quite pleasant. It may not be a great Bill Forsyth or John Sayles film, but it is certainly a very good Burt Reynolds film.



Burt Reynolds gives a surprising performance in his new movie *Breaking In*.

# Butler's show resembles lounge act

**Henry Butler**  
Yardbird Suite  
October 12 & 13

review by Mike Evans

New York-based jazz pianist and vocalist Henry Butler visited Edmonton to considerable advance praise this past weekend. He has received acclaim from numerous jazz publications in recent years as an eclectic stylist, melding all the indigenous musical forms which he encountered in his youth in New Orleans. He has said that New Orleans is "one of the best places to develop, because you don't have the opportunity to label yourself. You either play everything they put before you, use every opportunity to play music, or you don't play at all." Unfortunately, Butler's performance Friday resembled a lounge act more than a jazz performance, in part due to his celebrated eclecticism.

Butler opened his concert with two original compositions, "Improvisations on an Appalachian Theme" and "Improvisations on an Afghan Theme," both of which were virtual assaults of the keyboard. Melodically, both pieces were quite interesting but Butler's relentless attack undermined the


colour of his compositions. His next piece, composed by Butler's musical mentor Alvin Batiste, was much more successful, a kind of bluesy ragtime which more adequately displayed Butler's skill as a player. A number of his following tunes were jazz built on a twelve-bar pattern, a kind of lyrical storytelling, that redeemed the failure of his first two presentations. Unfortunately, that was followed by an uninspired rendering of the Beatles' "Yesterday" with gospel overtones that, while mildly interesting, revealed Butler's amazing vocals. He possesses an enormously powerful voice (Butler was trained as a classical vocalist) reminiscent of Paul Robeson, which he exploited to much better effect throughout the rest of the evening on a number of rhythm and blues and gospel numbers.

Perhaps the most annoying aspect of the evening was Butler's constant chatter between songs. Certainly it is refreshing to hear from the performer, often resolutely silent in jazz performances aside from announcing the next tune, but in this case Butler spoke as much as he played and his performance would have been more satisfying had his music been of larger proportion in the presentation.

The final score in The Gateway vs. FM88 football game...

# 839—0

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